Blakeslee, H. V. 18
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TURNING A SITUATION

INTO A

WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY

Blakeslee, H. V.

How do you tell an ignorant, superstitious, primitive people the Gospel story in a way that they can understand it? And do they really ever understand it?

If you could come with us some day as we go out to the villages to tell the story of Good News, we should perhaps find a company of old Gikuyu elders sitting on their low, three-legged stools in the center of a Gikuyu village, composed of five to twenty low grass huts built in a circle on a hill side. Each elder is clad in a red blanket, and his long spear is planted in the ground by his side.

We notice that a sheep skin is stretched out in the sun to dry. It is pegged to the ground with small wooden pegs.

After greeting the group of old men in the usual Gikuyu way, we say, "Well, you have been killing a sheep here today." "Yes, we have killed a sheep." "Why have you killed this sheep?" They shrug their shoulders and wink, one to the other, as much as to say, "How can we explain our affairs to the **muthungu** (white man); he does not understand." And then the owner of the village explains that they have killed the sheep because they wanted some meat to eat.

The Opening.

Suddenly we remember that last week when we visited this village, the daughter of the owner of the village was very ill, and we venture to ask him if his daughter is strong enough to go to the garden to cultivate.

"Oh," replies the old man, "haven't you heard that my daughter died?"

"Ah, then that explains why you have killed this sheep here today."

In the Gikuyu tribe, death in a village brings defilement to that village and a curse to the people. The owner of every village kills a sheep periodically, and employs the witch doctor to come and cleanse, purify, and remove every lurking curse that may be upon the village, with the blood of the slain sheep. After this ceremony has been performed, the owner takes every precaution possible to prevent any thing or any one from entering his village who would in any way defile it. Thus it is that when any member of the village is very ill and their recovery despaired of, they are quickly removed to the bushes to die, that their death in the village may not bring a curse. It always falls to the lot of the oldest son, if there be one, to sit near the sick one in the bushes and keep a fire burning, lest the hyenas come and carry away the sick one before the life has left the body.

Addressing the father of the dead girl, we ask, "and you would not allow your oldest son, who has been watching by his sister's side in the bushes, to come into your hut or your village until you have killed this sheep, would you?"

"No," he replies, most emphatically.

"And you would not allow his mother to cook food of any kind for him until you have killed this sheep?"

"No, for if a mother cooked food for her defiled son, would she not become defiled too?"

"Do you hate your oldest son?"

"Oh, no, Bibi; do you not know that an old man loves his oldest son best of all? But you see, if I allowed him to come in with his defilement he would spoil my entire village, and bring a curse to all of my people."

The Analogy.

Isn't it strange that you old Gikuyu elders should reason just as God reasons, and think the same thoughts He thinks? God has a beautiful village made of ivory palaces and gold streets. Tears, sickness, pain and death can never touch the people that live in the village of God. There is room enough there for all of the white people and all of the black people, and when God looked down from that beautiful village and saw how distressed and troubled by pain, sickness, and death we all were down here, He longed that He might have us all come to live with Him in His village throughout the ages of eternity. But He saw one thing that prevented Him from allowing us to come; He saw that we were full of sin and defilement, and he had said that nothing defiling or unclean should enter His village. But, because He pitied our helplessness and sorrow, and loved us, He began to search for something that would take away our defilement and make us clean, so that we would not spoil His village. Which do you old Gikuyu elders say is the stronger: the blood of a sheep or the blood of a cow?"

The Blood of A Man.

"Oh, **Bibi**, we all know the blood of a cow is stronger than the blood of a sheep."

"And is the blood of a man stronger than that of a cow?"

"Yes, we Gikuyu elders say that it is."

"Here again, you elders think just as God thinks. He saw that the blood of sheep and bulls could never take away man's defilement.

He said it must be the blood of a man. And so, His greatly beloved and only Son came down to this earth, born as a little child, and when He grew to be a man, the men of this world hanged Him to a cross, pierced His side with a spear, and the blood flowed down His side. Now, God says, 'Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.' If you and I believe in the blood of His son, that it was shed there on the cross to take away your defilement and mine, and that there is no other way or cure, God will blot out and take away all of our sin, and make us to be citizens of His village, and we shall live with Him there throughout the ages of eternity."

"Now that you have killed this sheep today, and the witch doctor has sprinkled your son with the blood, did he feel his **thahu** (defilement) roll away into the bushes?"

"No, **Bibi,** he did not feel his **thahu** roll away into the bushes."

"Well, did he see it go away into the bushes?"

"No. he did not see it go away."

"How do you know it is gone?"

"**Bibi,** the witch doctor sprinkles him with the blood of the sheep and says, 'It is all gone,' and we know it is gone because the witch doctor says so."

"Why, that is just the way I know my sin is all taken away. God says, 'When I see the blood I will pass over all your sin and defilement, and will blot it out and remember it against you no more forever.' I believe the blood of Jesus Christ was shed on the Cross for my sins, God applies it to my heart, with it blots out my sins, and I shall go to live with Him in His beautiful village,

not because I saw Him take my sins away, or felt Him take them away, but because He said He did it and I believe His words."

My friends, that group of old Gikuyu elders, who may never have heard the story before, understand perfectly God's wonderful plan of redemption for a sin cursed world, because they believe that without the shedding of blood there can be no cleansing; but the great task is to get them to have a saving faith in God instead of the witch doctor and his impositions.

DR. H. V. BLAKESLEE.

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